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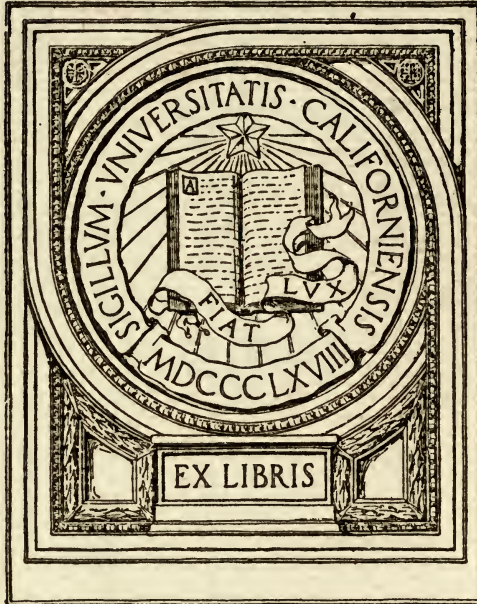


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California at
Christmas
Tide

Univ. of
CALIFORNIA



ELLIN M. SEXTON

CALIFORNIA AT CHRISTMAS TIDE

BY

ELLA M. SEXTON

965

AUTHOR OF "STORIES OF CALIFORNIA" AND "WHAT THE
CHILDREN SAY"



SAN FRANCISCO, CHRISTMAS, 1902

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To my friend

Mrs. John H. Jewett

||

To Mrs. Josephine Foster
with the author's regards,
740230 Ella M. Sexton.

to visit
ANSWERED

Class of 1887

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CALIFORNIA AT CHRISTMAS-TIDE



“**D**ECEMBER!” says the year: but rose and bee
And meadow-lark with trills of sweetest tune
Say “No, ’tis June!”

Stern black and white, the calendar’s decree,
Yet we who read, bewildered, turn to see
Wide intervals of tender green, and thrill
To fire of southern sun caressing still
December’s noon.

What dawns late-flushed with mingled gold and rose,
And slowly bright’ning, till each perfect day
Smiles hours away
Under a cloudless turquoise sky! Then shows
The pearly bubble of the moon, that grows
To luminous whiteness as the low sun wanes;
While, as the planets burn, December feigns
June’s mellow ray.

Unchanged the spires of cypress, and the sweep
Of crowding hosts of gum trees up the hill
Where summer still
With gold of vagrant poppies flecks the steep;
Yet winter violets bloom with fragrance deep.
Perplexed, entranced, we are but sure this seems
The “land of afternoon,” and lotus-dreams
Our senses thrill.

TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

A CHRISTMAS ROSE



ROSE, at the Monterey Mission unfolding,
Rose the good Padres once cherishing trained
On these adobe walls gnarled stems upholding
Chalices perfumed and sunset-pink stained,
Rosa Castilian, sweet rose of the Mission,
Secrets, ah, surely, your gold hearts retained
As the long century drowsily waned !

Rose, did they whisper, those Padres, but aves
While gay boleros soft tinkled without
Corridors white in the moonlight, and pathways
Darkened where twin shadows flitted about ?
Rosa Castilian, fair rose of the Mission,
Never a kiss set your pink lips to pout,
Never a languorous lover to flout ?

Rose, in some odorous twilight fast-flying
(Waiting the Angelus prayers to repeat)
Stooped not a friar, gray-robed, softly sighing
Into your warm ear a confidence sweet ?
Rosa Castilian, dear rose of the Mission,
Once you leaned, surely, some ardent heart's beat,
Quickened by ancient romances, to greet ?

Rose on these crumbling walls tenderly cherished
Years to you naught but the sunshine and rain,
Dust are the Padres, their sepulchres perished ;
Mouldering missal and vestments remain,
Rosa Castilian, old rose of the Mission,
Long-vanished glories their voiceless refrain,
Passing of power Franciscan, of Spain.

Rose with this austral sun's golden wine filling
Lavish cups, brimming and perfumed to-day,
No breath of winter, nor icy blast chilling
Bloom of December as constant as May,
Rosa Castilian, first rose of the Mission—
Ah, but the magical tales you might say,
Pink lips from golden hearts curving away!



CHRISTMAS ❖ ❖ ❖ HERE AND THERE



BELLS of Christmas, a carillon sending
Of silver chimes through the sunny day,
Cloudless azure of June sky bending
Over the sapphire bay—
*Bitter the Christmas there, and snowing,
Keen the rough winds blowing!*

Sunshine flooding the purple distance
Of farther mountain, and hillsides near;
Violets breathing with sweet insistence,
“Winter is banished here.”
*Frozen and bleak the garden spaces
Lift their desolate faces!*

Larks in our grassy meadows trilling,
Love and hope in their raptures told;
Clusters of lavish poppies spilling
Bright, brimming cups of gold—
*Silent the woodlands gray, where only
Bare fields shiver, lonely!*

Lightly fall in our golden weather
Strokes of Time for the flying hours;
Fair Earth smiles with the Year, together
Marking our paths with flowers—
*Long the winter's reign, and weary,
Cold December dreary!*

TWO PICTURES



THERE:

BITTER the keen winds blowing under sullen skies and
low,

Where the dying sun, his brief task done, sinks blood-red
over the snow;

Snow with its merciless beauty, snow with its deadly hold
On the pulses warm of each shuddering form that dares
the cruel cold.

God pity the shelterless vagrant whose wandering steps
and slow

Falter and fail in the icy gale while darkens the waste
below—

O, the scourging lash of the blizzard, the blinding, stinging
sleet,

The gaunt white wolves of Hunger and Cold that follow,
grim and fleet!



HERE:

NEW grass in all the sunny spaces;
New robes for earth's brown breast
The rains weave fast, in vacant places
By southern sun caressed.

New hopes through hearts despairing thrilling,
New life a glad world knows
With larks in greenest meadows trilling
Where gold of poppies glows.

Red are the garden roses budding;
Through casements wide, the room
Warm winds with violet odors flooding,
Knows Spring's dear, faint perfume.

TO A DECEMBER VIOLET



DEAR violet, a passing guest
With Lenten gown of purple dressed
In colder clime,
Sweet saint, uplifting tender eyes
To April's pale and changing skies—
As brief your prime.

But constant to our sunshine, here
We find you, love you through the year,
As friend, nay, more :
Fast drive the wind-swept rains, and, too,
The frost smites frailer bloom, while you
Smile as before.

No passionate rose are you, sweetheart,
With red lips curved to all, apart
In shyest grace
You nestle—yet the garden's pride
Of bloom and beauty wanes beside
Your dainty face.

In sheltering leaves you hide, demure,
From careless glance or touch secure,
But lovers true
Led by your perfume faintly sweet—
A breath of heaven, perchance—we greet
Your heavenly blue.

Ah, little love, your calm content
Shames restless souls with striving spent.
Would we might find
Nepenthe in the sunshine: cease
To war with Fate and smile in peace,
To life resigned !

WITH CHRISTMAS
VIOLETS TO HER



FROM sunny gardens where no blight
Of winter mars their perfect bloom,
These purple violets waft delight
Of sweet perfume.

Across wide, desolate wastes of snow,
With breath of summer swiftly fare,
Where stern December skies brood low
O'er gardens bare.

Tell her of sapphire sky and sea,
Of warm, caressing sunshine here,
And green fields fair as Arcady
Where larks sing clear.

Yet, Sweet, 'twere Arcady though snows
Lay deep along each frosty way,
If, but your cheek could lean, a rose,
To mine to-day!

CHRISTMAS SONG FOR CALIFORNIA



NO winter's blight our Christmas knows,
No bitter blasts, nor sparkling snows:
The old year wanes, the old year goes
While halcyon hours
Drift on enchanted pinions fleet
In sunny gardens, where with sweet
And haunting perfume violets greet
Late summer's flowers.

Scarce dream we Christmas almost near
So blue December skies appear,
So green the beckoning fields, so clear
Rise hills remote.
The golden present thralls: no past
Nor morrow's cares dark shadows cast,
But on Time's dial, flying fast
Bright hours we note.

Ring out, glad Christmas bells, nor cease
From snows to palms by tropic seas,
Your tidings of good-will and peace
Exultant sound.
Ring out, blest tale of love Divine
Where'er the Christmas wreaths of pine,
Our violets blue, or holly twine
The world around.

OUR CHRISTMAS BERRIES



HIGH on the leaning hillsides climbing
Yon purple wall of the mountain flanks
Out of the chaparral's thickest tangle
That rims the rushing torrent's banks,
With a brilliant glimmer of vivid scarlet
Our Christmas berries smile, and shine
From a maze of oak and glossy laurel,
Manzanita and wind-swept pine.

Up the wild, rough trails in the canyons,
Crushing the ferns and wet, sweet bay,
While the pungent odor of yerba-buena
Follows our breathless, headlong way:
Clambering high for more perfect clusters
Set red-ripe in the tenderest green—
O, the joy of it, and far gazing
From heights won bravely the seaward scene!

Perchance for robin as red, and blue-jay
This feast of Nature's is spread alone,
But lavish as all this fair land's treasures,
Free as the sunshine the poorest own.
So to the dwellers where, thronging closely,
Glimpses of woodland beauty are rare,
Joy and color these Christmas berries
Bring to the dullness of ceaseless care.

What care we for the alien holly
Stiff and stately with ancient pride
Of Merrie England? We crown our revels
With sun-kissed garlands, and wreath beside
Branches of redwood with fragrance sylvan
Grandest of mansions, or cot within:
Lending the smile of Mother Nature
To make us comrades, and Christmas kin.

NEAR AND FAR AT CHRISTMAS TIME



THE Christmas bells ring out—though bleak December
Far, far remote appears
To hearts that in this summer land, remember
Gay feasts of other years
In colder climes, beyond these palms, and breathing
Wild fragrance of the pine
From trackless woodlands, where deep snows were wreath-
ing
Their glittering garlands fine.

Then rang the bells in mellow cadence, chiming
Through keen and frosty air:
Rang happiness, our answering heart-beats timing
The Christmas chorus there.
But on this western shore (an alien seeming
To winter's rigorous hold)
Perplexed we pause, to deem December dreaming
As flowers of June unfold.

Or from the high cloud-spaces swift descending
The spirit of the rain
Hovers above the waiting hillsides, bending
Low to the thirsty plain:
Her vapory mantle on the south wind flowing
Athwart the mountain's crest,
Her hands outstretched with gracious benison, sowing
Promise of harvest blest.

Soon follow emerald leagues of young grain springing :
Bright gold on sunny slopes
Our poppies scatter, while the larks dream, singing,
Of love and wakened hopes.
Stirs the warm earth with quickening growth and tender
The blue of Christmas skies :
Radiant with floods of soft yet brilliant splendor
The low sun mounts, and dies.

BEFORE CHRISTMAS



COUNTING the days till Christmas!
A mighty army tells
These rosary-beads of old Time's chain
Ere ring the Christmas bells:
And our round world far and nearer
From palm to Arctic pine,
There's a myriad eager hands that wait
The Christmas wreaths to twine.

Counting the days till Christmas!
Slow wanes the score, till all
Are told, with constant, anxious glance
Each calendar must recall.
Days by the low sun smiling
So brief, yet each we greet
With longing sighs for the laggard march
Of Time's unhurried feet.

Counting the days till Christmas!
God's gifts, our children, dwell
In a maze of happy dreams these nights;
And daylight stories tell
Of marvelous gifts the Christ-child
To a fairy-tree will bear
That grows, on Christmas Eve, to hold
The wondrous gifts they share.

Counting the days till Christmas!
Sweet days of tender care
That loved ones may on the blessed morn
Find longed-for treasures fair.
Thus dreaming, hoping and waiting,
That holiest day draws near
When "Peace on earth, good-will to men"
Ring out the joy-bells clear.



